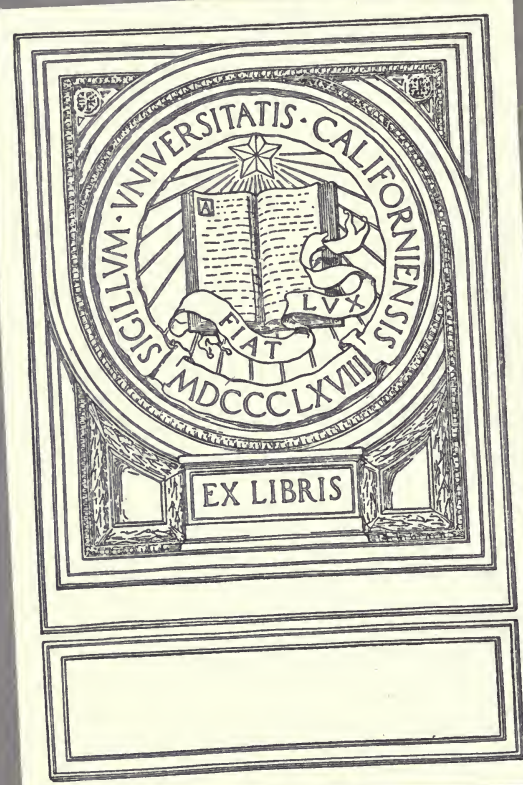



~~BX~~
5995
C8C3

BX 5995
087 C2
1765





*The firm Belief of a future Reward a powerful
Motive to Obedience and a good Life.*

A
S E R M O N

P R E A C H E D

A T

CHRIST CHURCH

In BOSTON,

AUGUST 20. 1765.

At the FUNERAL of the

Rev. TIMOTHY CUTLER, D.D.

LATE RECTOR OF SAID CHURCH.

By *HENRY CANER*, A. M.

MINISTER OF KING'S CHAPEL.

Publiſh'd at the Request of the Wardens and Vestry of
Christ Church.

B O S T O N :

PRINTED BY THOMAS AND JOHN FLEET IN CORNHILL,
MDCCLXV.

BX 5995
C9C3

MEMORIAL

CHRIST CHURCH

in BOSTON

As the MEMORIAL of the

REV. FREDERICK GOSWELL D.D.

BY HENRY CHANNING A.M.

PRINTED BY T. B. BROWN

1835

THE FUTURE REWARD

A

SUITABLE MOTIVE OF RELIGION.



HEBREWS XI. 26.

— *For he had respect unto the recompence
of the reward.*

TO disengage yourselves sometimes from the little interests and amusements of life, to call off the mind from sensual pursuits to seriousness and recollection, is both highly useful in itself, and is also matter of positive duty, recommended in various precepts of holy writ.

By a long and close attention to the pleasures, the business, but especially the vanities of life, men grow insensible to things of more solemn consequence; the mind gradually acquires

quires a kind of habitual stupidity as to spiritual pleasures, and in consequence of this a fatal disrelish of them too; for the faculties of the mind as well as of the body, are improved and brightned by proper exercise, and acquire their various tastes of pleasure and aversion from the objects upon which they are chiefly employed.

As this is a state which oftentimes insensibly steals upon a Christian, from that necessary intercourse with sensual objects which the condition of his nature requires; it becomes a matter of great importance, frequently to examine the temper and disposition of the soul; its love and aversion, its satisfaction and distaste, that we may be enabled to judge, whether its chief pleasure be rational, and becoming the dignity of its high original; but especially to look forward to that solemn period, which must shortly close the scene of all present enjoyments, and lay open an unclouded prospect of eternity. To render this prospect desirable now, and agreeable when it arrives, the example recorded in the text may be highly useful, since neither the troubles nor temptations of this life, can have much influence upon him, who by a lively faith and steadfast hope has *respect to the recompence of the reward.*

The author of this epistle, at the 6th verse of this chapter had laid down this general proposition, that *God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*; and that the belief of this proposition is necessary to invite our addresses and application to him; to encourage us in the way of godliness, to confirm our diligence and perseverance, and more especially to animate and support us under the afflictions and persecutions which at any time befall us. In proof of what he had asserted, he proceeds to exemplify the truth of it, by adducing sundry instances of holy men, who, in virtue of this faith, (i. e. the firm belief that God would finally reward them for their sufferings) had cheerfully undergone the severest instances of persecution, and had even laid down their lives in the joyful expectation of a glorious reward, which God had reserved for them in heaven. The particular instance in the text, by a peculiar disposition of divine providence, did not indeed proceed to this last extremity, God having preserved this man to become the instrument of a most wonderful and gracious œconomy, which, agreeable to the purposes of his wisdom, was then ripe for being disclosed to the world. But in the firmness of his virtue,

tue, the strength and resolution of his faith, and his confidence of an invisible reward, he exposed himself to very great trials, and even to the apparent danger of laying down his life a sacrifice to his faith.

He had a great interest in the Egyptian court, and stood fair for being advanced to the highest honours and interests of it; and yet he voluntarily rejected and despised these advantages, in prospect of a future recompence; *choosing, as the apostle says, rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.*

We see then what force there is in this motive of a future reward, when firmly believed. — We see what influence it had in fact upon those many worthies whom the apostle hath recorded. — Why is that influence abated in latter ages? Is the reward less certain to us than it was to them? Or is the prospect of it obscur'd under the present dispensation of the gospel? Nay verily, it is gloriously opened and enlarged. We have not only their testimony, but a cloud of witnesses besides, inviting us to *run the race that is set before us* with faith and patience,
looking

looking especially to Jesus the author and finisher of that faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now possessed of the reward, being set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Blessed be God! we are not called to so severe an exercise of our faith, we have neither resisted, nor have we been required to resist unto blood, in our warfare with sin. So much easier is our task, than that which fell to the lot of God's saints under the old dispensation, or than that which became the portion of those champions who were first charged with propagating the new. They are the pleasures, not the persecutions, the honours, not the terrors of the world, with which we are required to contend; the riches and interests, the ambition and vanity, the lusts and corruptions that solicit our regards; these cast a veil over the prospect of future glories, and dim the brightness of the unfading crown of immortality. But if our religion has provided us with motives that are sufficient to support men under persecutions and sufferings, surely the same motives should be allowed sufficient to conquer the passions and pleasures, the lusts and vanities of the world, with all other sinful temptations that beset us.

Some

Some indeed have refined upon the apostle's doctrine, by declaring, that however the prospect of a reward might be admitted as an encouragement to men under the former servile dispensation, yet it is unworthy to enter into the regards of a christian, who ought to be influenced by more generous motives, nor admit any thing as an encouragement to duty, but what solely terminates upon the love of God and Christ; every thing but this, they esteem selfish and mercenary, unworthy the spirit of the gospel. This I apprehend to be refining upon the christian religion, since not only the old testament worthies looked forward to the glories which should after be revealed, but the christian saints and martyrs were encouraged to contend for the prize of their high calling, to press forward towards it, and to have *respect to the recompence of reward*, to the crown of life, which God hath reserved for such as love him. Nay, and to put the matter beyond all dispute, our blessed Saviour himself is said to have *endured the cross, for the joy that was set before him*. We may therefore very well esteem this motive as a lawful spur and incentive to duty, which is confessedly allowed to have animated the saints under the old testament, and martyrs under the new, and even to have attracted the regards of the captain of our salvation himself.

Besides,

Besides, it ought to be considered, that the very reward itself, which is held forth to encourage us, can in its own nature have no weight or influence, till the love of God has taken place in the heart. They distinguish therefore without a difference, who make the love of God, and the desire of a future reward inconsistent with each other. For wherein does the future reward consist, but in the enjoyment of God, and those pleasures which perpetually flow from the blessed vision of him, and the capacity of transcribing continually his perfections? But as great a happiness as this is, it cannot, when truly understood, be sought after, or even desired, by those who are destitute of the love of God. A man must have a real affection for God, must be renewed after the divine image, in righteousness and true holiness, before he is really capable of having a due *respect to the recompence of reward*, before he can feel the want, or perceive the excellency of it, or be at all influenced by it. They quite mistake the thing, and shew themselves to be entirely ignorant of the nature of the future state, who imagine it to consist in any thing but a larger participation of God's moral perfections, and a constant eternally uninterrupted

B

improvement

improvement in them. This is the heavenly life, to be constantly beholding, admiring, praising, imitating God, and improving in new and further degrees of moral and spiritual perfection: And in this also consists the future reward. To look for any other, or to entertain any other lower notion or conception of it than this, is rather to expect a mahometan paradise than a christian heaven.

And I wish this were more thoroughly considered and weighed than I fear it commonly is. I am persuaded it would have a good effect upon mens lives, and would perhaps teach some people to fear and tremble at their condition, who think themselves in a fair way to heaven: For too many look upon the future state rather as a place than a condition. It is like some fine and healthful climate (they think) where, as there will be no place for pain or evil, or misery, for sickness or sorrow, for trouble or disappointment; so it will abound with the most agreeable pleasures, the most ravishing delights and entertainments, that their hearts can wish for. But then unfortunately they too often form their notions of the pleasures and entertainments they shall receive, from those enjoyments

enjoyments with which they have been chiefly delighted here, only they imagine that they will be some how or other greatly improved and refin'd beyond what they have ever yet experienced. Now where such sensual notions as these prevail, 'tis no wonder that men should be careless and negligent of their lives, since if they have but time to ask mercy and forgiveness of God and to assure him that they have no hatred or aversion to him, but are sincerely desirous of going to heaven, they conclude they have done enough to engage the divine compassion, and that God will therefore undoubtedly hearken to their requests.—But now should these men have their eyes open'd, and be taught to see that heaven and a future reward are quite different things from what they have all along apprehended them to be, that they consist in a divine temper and disposition of soul, which is form'd after the image of God, and participates of his nature and perfections, and that in proportion to the degrees of this spiritual improvement, are the degrees of their happiness and enjoyment; that these joys and that happiness are impossible to be entertained or embraced, but by those who have previously acquired such a conformity to the image of God.—I say if

all this were firmly entertained, and men embraced these, which are the true notions of future happiness; they would be in much less danger of misjudging their own condition, and would be more solicitous of acquiring that holiness here, without which they will never be admitted to see God hereafter.

It is a folly for any man to flatter or deceive himself in a matter of such infinite concernment as that of eternal happiness, but 'tis terrible to think of an everlasting existence in misery. The affair in regard to each must be settled in this life, after which it becomes irreversibile. The future judgment makes no real alteration, it is only declaratory of what we ourselves establish, by our own good or ill conduct in life. The capacity will indeed be enlarged after that event, to feel a full flow of happiness, or the full weight of God's wrath respectively, according to the sentence of each. But they are in a conditional state of election or reprobation previous to that period, and would they but impartially weigh their own temper and disposition, and conduct towards God, they might nearly form a judgment of their state, and by thus judging themselves by a proper care and circumspection might be led to prevent the judgment of God.

Thus

Thus have I endeavoured to illustrate and confirm the apostolic doctrine in the text, by proving that it is lawful to have respect to the recompence of reward. And if this doctrine be true, what a noble motive is it, to support the christian under the greatest troubles and difficulties that can befall him in this life ?

The force of this motive would appear indeed to greater advantage by considering the nature of that reward which we are thus encouraged to aspire after.—But in truth, of this I am able to say but little—for the things that God hath reserved for us in heaven, are too big for utterance, or even for conception. The mind is overborn and sinks under the weight of its own images, when it labours to comprehend the glories of the future state. Glorious things are indeed spoken of the city of God in the holy scriptures; but a perfect and distinct image of them is beyond mortal apprehension. And therefore it is that the joys and glories of that state are represented by crowns and sceptres, and such other ensigns of royalty and splendor, as imply the greatest dignity and enjoyment that we are acquainted with. Imperfect however as our conceptions
are,

are, they are sufficient to animate our fortitude under trials and temptations, and to inspire us with diligence and industry in the work of the Lord, since we have the highest assurance that *our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.*

Even that solemn employment of ours (my reverend brethren) filled with so many cares and inquietudes, and requiring so much firmness and diligence, so much wisdom and prudence to render it successful, if it be discharged with integrity and a good conscience, will meet with a reward infinitely beyond all the labours and difficulties of it; for they who are thus wise we are told *shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.*

Were it indeed possible for me to represent the joys of that blessed kingdom, and the never fading pleasures that flow at God's right hand, could I describe the exalted satisfaction that arises from the blessed vision of God, from the company and conversation of saints and angels, of cherubim and seraphim, the noble army of martyrs, the spirits of just men made perfect, the general assembly and church of the first-born,

born, but above all from the smiles of Jesus the redeemer, the mediator of the new covenant; could I paint these, and the thousand other excellencies and entertainments with which that state abounds in their proper colours, and were your faculties also enlarged and strengthened to apprehend them; then should I not doubt of persuading every one here present to despise the difficulties, the dangers and temptations that beset them in this mortal state, tho' they were indeed much greater and more numerous than they truly are.

In view of this recompence, and supported by the prospect of this glorious reward, our departed friend and brother was not only encouraged to discharge the important duties of that station to which the providence of God had call'd him, with fidelity and diligence; but was also enabled to undergo a long and grievous weight of affliction, which the same wise and righteous providence thought fit to lay upon him, with exemplary patience, fortitude and resignation. Earnestly desirous indeed he was to bring glory to God, and to promote the happiness and salvation of men, particularly of the flock committed to his charge by a
further

further exercise of his ministry, yet referred his desires to the will and wisdom of his blessed master, who best knows how to dispose of his servants, and what instruments to employ for effecting the purposes of his grace. Few men indeed have had a larger opportunity of exercising the ministerial function, or fewer interruptions in it; and very few I am persuaded have made a more faithful and diligent use of the opportunities afforded them. For above thirty years (I suppose) he was scarce detained a day, by sickness or such like accident, from officiating in the public duties of the church; but it pleased God in his righteous providence, for the last nine years of his life, to lay him under an incapacity for public service. Such a long course of preceeding health was certainly a very singular blessing of God, which this worthy person failed not to improve to the best advantage of himself, and of the people committed to his charge.

As he was born and educated in this neighbourhood, he was so generally well known among you, that I can offer little in the way of character concerning this faithful servant of Christ, but what most of you are already well acquainted

acquainted with. It may however be a satisfaction to some who had less knowledge of him to be inform'd, that under the advantage of a good natural capacity, joined with singular diligence and application, he made an early proficiency in useful literature, and was accordingly soon distinguished as likely to become eminent in his profession. As he turned his mind chiefly to theological studies, and the cultivation of those languages that might assist him in acquiring a competent knowledge of ecclesiastical history, he had soon a call to the ministry in a neighbouring government. The duties of this station he discharged with indefatigable diligence and fidelity, and acquired the universal love and respect of his people. But he was not suffer'd to continue long here. His learning and piety, his wisdom and prudence, joined with an excellent spirit of government, recommended him to a still more public employment, and he was accordingly chosen to preside over a seminary of learning which had then newly been established. This preferment he enjoyed with honour to himself, and with the approbation of the public, till in the course of reading and critical enquiry, he found himself under a necessity of conforming to the church of England. This event occasion'd his dismissal from that

honourable employment; and it may justly as well as charitably be supposed, that nothing but the obligations of conscience could have induced him, under the burden of a large and increasing family, and without any certain prospects, to throw up all present visible support. In this critical juncture however he providentially received an invitation to qualify himself for performing the ministerial office in this church. He look'd upon this as a disposition of divine providence in his favour, and therefore readily accepted the invitation, and proceeded to England to offer himself for holy orders. His reputation for learning and good morals, with the recommendatory testimonies he carried from hence, soon procured him what he desired, and moreover engaged the notice of many eminent persons at both university's, from each of which he received the compliment of an honorary degree of Doctor in Divinity. After a short stay in England he returned and entered upon the duties of his parish.

How faithfully in word in doctrine and example he has since discharged the pastoral office, you, his peculiar charge, his dear children in the gospel, with whom he travailed in birth that Christ might be formed in you, are best able

able to testify.—But others also can witness to his wisdom and prudence, to his tender care and solicitude to preserve peace and unity in the church, or to restore it where it was wanting.—He was inflexible indeed in his principles, these he accounted sacred. And as he had deliberately entertained a high opinion of the constitution of the church of England, so he was ever zealous in its defence. At the same time he took particular care not to vary from its rules, but endeavoured to support its interests and preserve its authority with great integrity. His firmness and zeal, his attachment and perseverance in the true faith and principles of the christian religion deserve the greatest notice, at a time when so many sit loose to the fundamental articles of it, think lightly of the great mysteries of our redemption by Christ, and if they stop short of barefaced infidelity, plunge into the gulph or dead sea of latitudinarianism, under the specious name of morality.

In short our departed friend was a wise, a learned, and pious man, a good christian, a faithful steward of the mysteries of God, a tried soldier and champion of Jesus Christ, who in prospect of the recompence of the reward that

was fet before him despised the frowns and flatteries of the world, maintained his great masters cause with undaunted courage and steadfast resolution, and is now (we trust) enter'd into the possession of the joy of his Lord.

It may possibly be objected that I have fallen short of saying what this great and eminently worthy person deserved—I am sensible I have so.—Let it be my apology, that for very many years I have had the honour of an intimate friendship with him; and I chose rather to be deficient, than by saying all that he deserved, to open the voice of slander, or provoke the sting of envy. I will venture to add, that it will be no unbecoming testimony of our regard to pray that the great Lord of the harvest will send forth more such faithful labourers into his harvest.

As to you whom nature and family connections had render'd more particularly dear to him, who were happy in his love, guided by his counsels, and comforted by his presence, you cannot indeed but mourn the loss of a tender husband and an affectionate father; yet let both remember from whose wise and righteous providence the visitation is derived, and let that
compose

compose your minds.—Bless God that the enjoyment was continued to you so long, that he was not gathered to the grave but in peace and in a good old age.—Be persuaded to cast your hope and trust upon that rock of ages, who is a never failing refuge to such as confide in him. Make him then your friend, your husband, your father, and your comforter. Submit your wills to his with a perfect resignation, and he will lead you safely by his counsel thro' this wilderness of sorrow and affliction, and after that bestow on you “the recompence of the reward,” a never fading crown of life and glory.

And now as to you the people of his charge, to whom God had entrusted the care of your souls; you cannot easily forget this your spiritual father; tho' God had for some years past suspended him from his pastoral duty, and hath now called him to himself, yet you cannot but remember with gratitude, *his former work and labour of love.* Call to mind his frequent exhortations and earnest entreaties, that you would hearken to the voice of Jesus Christ in the gospel, that you would close with the terms of salvation offer'd by him, and by repentance, faith and obedience get an interest in the promises.

mises of the new covenant. He has led you with affectionate tenderness, as a shepherd does his flock.—He has fed you with the sincere milk of the word, that you might grow thereby, and be nourished up unto life eternal. Being a *ready scribe, instructed in the will of God*, he brought forth out of his treasures things new and old, and made you abundant partakers of spiritual things. He ceased not for above thirty years to warn every man, and teach every man that he *might present you faultless before the throne of glory with exceeding joy* both to himself and you.—He is now gone to give account of his stewardship to the great Lord of all, who reserveth the recompence of reward for such as have been faithful in his service.—Recall to mind his admonitions and pious instructions, so, altho' he be dead, he shall yet speak to you in those salutary doctrines and godly exhortations, he formerly delivered.

And while you thus bear in remembrance his faithfulness and diligence in your service, be not unmindful to shew kindness to his house. The widow and the fatherless are always entitled to the tenderest regards, but more especially so, where particular connections and obligations concur to recommend them to your notice and affections.

To

To conclude, having the recompence of the reward in view, a glorious crown of life and immortality, let us all both ministers and people after the worthy example of our departed brother, determine to be steadfast and unmoveable in the faith and obedience of the gospel, in spite of all the difficulties and discouragements that may beset us, relying on the grace of Christ, who in like manner in prospect of the joy that was set before him endured infinitely greater trials than fall to the lot of any of us. And how inexpressible will that joy be to every one who shall thus in the faith and in the fear of God, persevere unto the end.— How refreshing a consolation in particular will every conscientious pastor of the christian church find in himself, when at the close of his labours, when the evening of life begins to lengthen his shadow and the grave threatens to cast a veil of darkness around him, he can look back on a life early dedicated, and faithfully spent in the service of God, and his church? How chearful thoughts, and what comfortable expectations will he have on his death bed? When he shall have good ground to hope, that as he has endeavoured to fit and prepare others for that solemn scene, and for a happy change,

so

so by the merits and mediation of his ever blessed redeemer his own sins shall be blotted out, and his labours accepted before the great tribunal. How happy to be able to say with the great apostle, "I have fought a good fight, I have kept the faith, I have finish'd my course, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of life." How much happier still to hear that blessed welcome of his Lord, "Well done good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Let me shut up this whole discourse with that exhortation of the apostle directed alike to all whether pastors or people.

"My beloved brethren be ye steadfast unmoveable always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord."

To God the Father the Son and the Holy Ghost be all Glory and Honor Dominion and Power now and forevermore. AMEN.

BX5995
C87C2
1765

14 DAY USE
RETURN TO DESK FROM WHICH BORROWED
LOAN DEPT.

This book is due on the last date stamped below, or
on the date to which renewed.
Renewed books are subject to immediate recall.

10 Jan '68 MH BOOKS DEPT.	

LD 21A-50m-12,'60
(B6221s10)476B

General Library
University of California
Berkeley

Caner, H.

The firm belief of
a future reward.

BX5995
C8C3

M180590

~~BX5995~~
~~C8C3~~

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

